

brethren, let us, while we live, so labor that when our summons shall come, we may feel that we are

"Drawn nearer to the sky."

Attention, Sir Knights! The sword of our brother knight, vowed only to be drawn in the cause of truth, justice, and rational liberty, reposes still in its scabbard, and our arms can no more shield him from envy or oppression.

## TAKING AN OBSERVATION.

It is well at times to pause and consider our ways. We should review the past and make a careful estimate of the present, to the end that a better progress and larger attainment be assured for the future. Thus the merchant takes an account of stock, makes investigation of his business and reckons up the gains or losses to which he has been subject. Thus the shipmaster takes a daily observation that he may ascertain the distance which has been sailed over, the course that has been kept, and his present position. Individually, and with regard to all the interests with which we are connected, it is our duty to take frequent observations, that we may know just where we are, what we have been doing, and whither we are tending. We are helped to such work by special seasons and occasions. At certain periods we are forced to look backward upon our course—to pause and consider! The close of the year is an occasion that prompts to such observation. When we are about to cross one of those imaginary lines by which continuous time is divided into annual periods, it is natural to halt, to send a glance backward over the way that has been travelled, while some serious thought is evoked in regard to the present condition and future prospects. Just now we have come close upon another of these suggestive lines. A few more rising and setting suns, and 1876 will be as much of an "old year" as the first year of the world's history. Standing by its waiting grave, we shall have quickened memories, to call to mind what the year has given and what it has taken away, to consider its changes of varied character, in the light of which we can best determine where we are now standing, and whither our steps seem tending.

As Masons, also, it is appropriate that we use those closing days in the taking of an observation respecting the Institution to which we are attached. Engaging in such work, we shall find abundant cause of congratulation in considering the progress made and the position now held by the Craft. In numbers, resources, character and outward influence, the Masonic Institution, taking the whole world into survey, was never stronger than now. In Great Britain and its Dependencies, Masonry has made vast strides toward popularity during the year just ending. The secession of the late Grand Master of Masons in England proved to be a blessing in disguise; for, by the filling of the place thus made vacant, by the heir apparent to the British throne, a fresh impetus was given to the Institution, and from that day to this it has prospered as never before. English Masonry is especially strong not only in numbers and wealth, but in the character of its membership, composed as it is quite largely of the more influential classes in society. Masonry is in theory a democratic organization. It puts men upon a common level. It does not recognize the factitious distinctions of society. Nevertheless it loses nothing when it attracts to its membership cultivated minds—when its course is shaped by men of recognized ability and character, and when it gathers large means into its treasuries.

On the Continent of Europe Masonry has also flourished during the year. In Germany, under the patronage and favor of Emperor William, Lodges have multiplied and a condition of high prosperity is evident. To the American Masonic vision, it looks as though the multiplying of Grand Lodges, the dividing of jurisdictions, and the "new departures" made by some of these Governing Bodies, would in the end bring about confusion and disorganization, and work great injury to the Craft. Masonry cannot long live and thrive except by strict adherence to its fundamental principles. In this connection we may allude to France where Masonic societies have been multiplying during the year, and where the outward progress has been great, but where some attempts have been made to pervert the Institution from its intrinsic character. If our Brethren in that jurisdiction carry out the proposition already made to eliminate a recognition of God from the Masonic ritual, they will cut themselves aloof from the sympathy of the Craft generally. Masonry is not to become atheistic in its liberality, nor is it to be used as an engine of opposition against either Church or State. When it takes on this character it is *not* Masonry except in name.

In Italy as the power of the Papacy has waned, Masonry has made progress. The